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ART. I.— *The Life and Letters of BARTHOLD GEORGE NIEBUHR, with Essays on his Character and Influence.* By the Chevalier BUNSEN, and Professors BRANDIS and LOEBELL. London: Chapman & Hall. 1852. 2 vols. 8vo., pp. 424 and 453.

WE talk and hear much about the shortness of human life; and in many of its aspects, it is a dream, a shadow, a vapor. No metaphor can overstate its brevity, as compared with its offices and its issues. There die, every year, thousands of old people, who have been all their days preparing and beginning to live, and who pass away before they are conscious of having approached even their own humble ideal of life, its objects and its uses. But there appear, at intervals, sometimes in stations of eminent influence, oftener in the more retired walks of duty, those who so crowd their two, three, or four score years with acquisition or achievement, as indefinitely to enlarge the reputed capacity, and to enhance the current value, of their term of being. They seem, not indeed absolutely, but relatively, to exhaust the resources of their present condition. They read a portion of the record on every leaf of the great book of nature and of experience, and become so familiar with the aspect of what they have omitted to read, that it has ceased to stimulate their curiosity, so that, as regards their birth-world, they have reached a position from which they can claim "a better inheritance."

Such examples are needed to give us confidence in life, and courage for its work — to make us feel that we need not describe the merest fragments of an orbit, leave only the paltriest memorials of ourselves, and go hence without attaining or accomplishing aught that is worthy or permanent. Never have lessons of this sort been impressed upon us so forcefully as by the volumes named at the head of this article. Were they not minute in dates, and specific in details, we could almost deem them fabulous. They present to us a man who, as a husband, father, neighbor, and friend, left nothing to be regretted; who sustained, from boyhood almost till death, important and onerous posts of public service, and who yet was so universally learned and accomplished, that it is impossible to say in what department there were not, within his easy reach, laurels as noble as those which he won as the historian of Rome. But no more of this, till we have told, in brief, the story of his outward life.

Barthold George Niebuhr was born at Copenhagen, in 1776. His father was Carsten Niebuhr, the celebrated traveller, who, in 1778, was appointed by the Danish government secretary to the province of South Dithmarsh, and fixed his residence at Meldorf, its chief town. Here Barthold passed his childhood and early youth. The place had no points of attraction or features of interest. Surrounded by morasses of great extent, remote from all thoroughfares of travel, with little business, a diminishing population, and almost no cultivated society, it furnished for the future scholar few collateral influences to help or mar the processes of home education. Indeed, so little did it present to his regard, that his reflective rapidly outgrew his perceptive faculties, and he was almost born into the book-world, upon which boys are seldom wont to enter without some previous training from nature and society. The consequence was, that he had reached manhood before he became accessible to beauty in the outward universe, though in after life, he was keenly alive to impressions from this source. His parents were persons of great excellence, yet by no means of that versatility of genius or “many-sidedness” of culture, which might have been desired in those who were, for many years, to be almost the sole educators of a child of unusual

capacity and promise. His father was, as to his moral character, pure, upright, and conscientious, but not a man of refined sentiments or enlarged sympathies — as to intellect, well versed in the classics, and profoundly learned in history and topography, but deficient in the elegant literature of modern times, and in the tastes which it presupposes or inspires. His mother was a woman of refinement, and great sweetness and tenderness of spirit, but nervous, excitable, impulsive, and high-tempered. The son succeeded to his father's endowments and supplied his deficiencies; — he inherited his mother's virtues, while infirmities, akin to hers, marked his character sufficiently to cast a frequent cloud over his own happiness, though they were held in such restraint by vigorous self-discipline as never permanently to alienate a friend or to make an enemy.

Until his sixteenth year, his education was conducted in part by his father, in part by such teachers, by no means of the highest order, as the Gymnasium of Meldorf afforded. He had, by this time, become a proficient in the classics, capable of reading the French and English languages as he did his mother tongue, and a prodigy of learning in numerous and recondite branches of historical and geographical knowledge. In 1792, he was sent to a school at Hamburg, the most celebrated of its kind in Europe for instruction in modern languages and commercial science. Here he remained but a few months; for he found himself out of place among associates of his own age, and impeded rather than aided in the departments of knowledge in which he felt the liveliest interest. Another year and a half were spent under his father's roof. Of his attainments, before he had completed his eighteenth year, we may form some idea from a list of the languages with which he had already become conversant; namely, German, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Danish, English, French, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish, to which he afterwards added the Persian, Arabic, Dutch, Swedish, Russian, Slavonic, Polish, Bohemian, and Illyrian, not to speak of the Icelandic, in which he made but little proficiency.

In 1794, he entered the University of Kiel. Here he found himself admirably situated, both as regarded facilities for

study and an affluence of learned society. With some of his fellow students he formed a close intimacy; but his chief intercourse was with the professors, with whom he seems to have occupied the position of an associate rather than a pupil. Of the maturity of his attainments and the philosophical cast of his speculations at this early epoch, we may judge from the following extract from a letter to his parents, dated June 7, 1794; (we doubt whether another such letter was ever written by a youth of eighteen.)

“I have not as yet fully explained to anybody but Hensler, my ideas about the colonization of Greece, and the whole of Asia Minor, including Armenia, from the West. For the peopling of the rest of Asia, I assume, 1. the Aramaic or Assyrian race, to which belong the Arabs, Jews, Syrians, Assyrians, Chaldees, and Medes, of more or less pure descent; 2. the Indo-Persic; 3. the Tartar; 4. the Mongul; and 5. probably the Chinese race. Taking this as a basis, we can proceed further, and shall obtain everywhere at last the same result, viz., that these great national races have never sprung from the growth of a single family into a nation, but always from the association of several families of human beings, raised above their fellow animals by the nature of their wants, and the gradual invention of a language, each of which families probably had originally formed a language peculiar to itself. This last idea belongs to Reinhold. By this I explain the immense variety of languages among the North American savages, which it is absolutely impossible to refer to any common source, but which, in some cases, have resolved themselves into one language, as in Mexico and Peru, for instance; and also the number of synonyms in the earliest periods of languages. On this account, I maintain that we must make a very cautious use of differences of language as applied to the theory of races, and have more regard to physical conformation, which latter is exactly the same, for instance, in most of the Indian tribes of North America. I believe further that the origin of the human race is not connected with any given place, but is to be sought everywhere over the face of the earth: and that it is an idea more worthy of the power and wisdom of the Creator, to assume that he gave to each zone and each climate its proper inhabitants, to whom that zone and climate would be the most suitable, than to assume that the human species has degenerated in such innumerable instances.\*

\* Of course, by quoting, we are not regarded as endorsing, this opinion; but the discussion of it would be entirely foreign to the purpose of the present article, especially as we find no reason to suppose that it commanded the assent of his riper years.

Here is one of the most important elements of history still remaining to be examined,—that which is, in truth, the very basis upon which all history must be reared, and the first principle from which it must proceed. This of all subjects should be thoroughly investigated in the first place; and then (to which philosophy is necessary) a universal history ought to be written, which should exhibit all nations from the same point of view. This point of view Reinhold beautifully defines as the relation between reason and sensation. When this universal history is completed, the separate history of each country should follow. This is the way in which I would teach history, if I had Hegewisch's learning and position. But the latter I wish for less and less the more I know of it. H. began to talk to me one day as if he wished to attract me to the academical profession; but withdrew his proposals, when I assured him that I should desire a life of greater activity, and more opportunity to make myself useful, especially in such times as ours. This he quite approved of, and advised me, therefore, zealously to study Roman law, and pitied me for having to devote so much time to other things; but as to this too, every thing depends upon the point of view from which we regard our studies, and the manner in which we pursue them. I have not yet told Hensler of our projects, because they are growing rather problematical to me; but he bids me take courage, whatever happen, for, he says, I should be certain to rise by my own exertion without any occasion for servility. That I voluntarily go to no parties, has his full approbation. They rob me of the evening and the morning hours; and, what is still worse, of the calmness of mind which must be undisturbed by dissipation, if one is to work." Vol. i. pp. 38–40.

At the house of Dr. Hensler, Niebuhr formed an intimacy which, more than any other, shaped the whole destiny of his subsequent life. It was with the widow of Dr. Hensler's son, a woman of superior cultivation, great strength of mind, sound judgment, and lofty principle. She was six years older than Niebuhr, and could, therefore, without assumption on her part or reserve on his, maintain, as she did till the day of his death, the attitude of an experienced adviser and friend. To her most of the letters in the volumes now before us were addressed, and she was the principal editor of the voluminous *Lebensnachrichten*, from which these letters have been translated, and the facts of the accompanying memoir, for the most part, derived.

In 1796, Niebuhr became private secretary to Count Schimmelmann, the Danish Minister of Finance, in which capacity, with subsequently an additional office in connection with the Royal Library, he resided at Copenhagen for nearly two years. Here he had free admission to society of the highest rank, and enjoyed superior advantages of education as a financier and a statesman. At the same time, his leisure was devoted to historical, classical, and scientific pursuits, and was made adequate to a larger amount of intellectual labor than would seem credible, had he been nothing else than a student. It is pleasant, also, to see that, in the press of secular engagements and the ardor of successful scholarship, the discipline of his moral nature was not forgotten. In his diary, "distinct consciousness of the rules of my moral being" is named as a part of every day's duty; and about the same time, he put on record "the holy resolve, now more and more to purify his soul, so that it may be ready at all times to return without fear to the Eternal Source from which it sprang,"—a resolve, which may be fairly taken as the formula of his whole being, as the ulterior aim in all his intellectual pursuits, and as the controlling principle in his public trusts, and in the relations of his domestic and social life. During this period, he contracted an engagement of marriage with Amelia Behrens, sister of Madame Hensler, whose blended gentleness and nobleness of nature at once gave repose to his native sensitiveness and irritability, and imparted new vigor to the lofty aims and purposes which he held constantly in view.

His father had long been solicitous that he should seek improvement by foreign travel and residence; and in the summer of 1798, he took passage for England, and remained in Great Britain, the greater part of the time, in attendance upon lectures at the University of Edinburgh, till the autumn of the following year. The subjects to which he chiefly applied himself, during this period, were mathematics and the physical sciences, finance and political philosophy, agriculture and topography; while, *for recreation only*, he had recourse to philology and history. He became deeply impressed with the substantial integrity, good sense, and practical wisdom of the English character, while he manifestly underrated the national

traits of the Scotch, misunderstood the peculiar phases of their religious life,—in its technical rigidity so unlike the less dogmatic and more fervent pietism of the Continent,—and was repelled by the characteristic reserve of their social intercourse and domestic manners.

In the spring of 1800, he was married, and shortly after, entered at Copenhagen upon the double office of Assessor at the Board of Trade for the East India Department, and Secretary of the Board of Direction for the African Consulates. In these and other public trusts, he remained a diligent servant of the state until 1806. During these years, his official duties filled up the business hours of every day; but his nights were devoted to his favorite studies, whenever absolute exhaustion did not compel him to substitute light reading for severer mental task-work. But he had reached a point, at which his mind could not help growing. He had accumulated so large a capital of well-digested knowledge, that it could not fail to become perpetually larger by its own inherent laws of increase, without accessions from books. He had in store materials sufficient for the constant eliciting of new truth by comparison, combination, and successive generalizations. He had attained a stage of progress, at which the present held a torch for the illumination of the past, current experience interpreted the experience of earlier ages, the details of business illustrated and confirmed general principles, and the daily observation of men threw increasing light upon the science of man and the historical developments of the race. Indeed, we cannot but deem it fortunate, as regarded his future eminence, that his official life so early arrested tendencies, which else might have made him an unproductive bookworm, (*helluo librorum*), and prevented the acquisition of the raw material of knowledge beyond all power of analysis, classification, and those digestive and assimilative processes through which alone knowledge can be transmuted into wisdom. We are the more inclined to express this judgment, from the frequency with which the German mind has been crushed and paralyzed by an excess of erudition,—overlaid and overmastered by crude, compact masses of unarranged facts, theories, and philosophies,—utterly bereft of the capacity of reproduction.



In 1806, Niebuhr accepted an important financial situation under the Prussian government, which, with a brief intermission, he continued to serve, in various financial and administrative posts, till 1815. This period comprised the most straitened and calamitous years of the history of his adopted country. On his first entrance upon its borders, it is hardly an exaggeration to say that he started in pursuit of a fugitive court, without knowing where to find it. It was just at the time of the defeat of the Prussian forces at Jena, and at the commencement of the long series of disturbances and disasters consequent on the successes of Napoleon. The government was dismembered, impoverished, almost powerless, endangered by treacherous counsels no less than by hostility from without, and no pilot, of reliable experience, to take the helm of state. Under these circumstances, Niebuhr made it a point of honor not to desert the public service so long as it demanded no sacrifice of principle; and so evident was his disinterested fidelity and patriotism, that no virulence of party opposition ever dared to assail his integrity, or to hint at the bare possibility of his being capable of intrigue, or a practicable subject for bribery or corruption. He never, for a moment, lost the confidence of his sovereign; and he won the absolutely filial attachment of the Crown Prince, to whom he gave lessons in certain branches of political science. During a portion of the time, he resided in Holland, as a commissioner to negotiate a loan in that country. Berlin, however, was his home. Here he had access to the society of a large number of distinguished scholars, among whom were Schleiermacher, Savigny, Buttmann, and Heindorff. In 1810, he enjoyed an interval of repose from political service, and became, in the same year, a professor in the University. He selected Roman History as the subject for his first course of lectures, and the success which attended their delivery induced him to extend his researches, with a view to their publication. This course was the basis of the first two volumes of his History. A course, delivered the following year, was to have furnished materials for the third volume, the final publication of which was, however, delayed till after his death. The lectures were delivered to audiences in which the most distinguished men of the city

were mingled with the students of the University; and they attracted the strongest interest from the freshness of his treatment, the originality of his theories, and the striking character of the discoveries elicited by the collation of authorities under the strong light of a comprehensive and far-reaching philosophy. His progress in this department of research was arrested by the public events connected with the turning tide of Napoleon's fortunes, and by fresh demands made by the government upon his services.

About this time, too, he was visited by severe domestic calamity. His father died in April, 1815. His wife, whose health had been long declining, during that spring sank with a rapidity which left no hope of her recovery, and died in the following June. She had sympathized with him in all his pursuits, had encouraged him under disheartening circumstances, had often warded off, and always alleviated, the sufferings to which his sensitive nature laid him constantly open, and had received from him almost the confidence and reverence due to a guardian angel. Among her dying charges, she enjoined it upon him that he should finish his History. Though its prosecution was unavoidably delayed for many years, when he returned to it, it was less for fame or from his own independent choice, than as a pious tribute to her memory.

A few weeks before her death, the Prussian government appointed him an ambassador to Rome, to negotiate a concordat with the Pope, for the settlement of the rights and immunities of its Catholic subjects. Madame Hensler was then with him; and on leaving him, after her sister's decease, consented, in compliance with his urgent solicitation, to accompany him to Rome. She accordingly revisited Berlin the following spring; but in her place, another, who became his by a still dearer tie, shared his journey and his long residence in Italy. She brought with her to Berlin her husband's niece and her own adopted daughter, Margaret Hensler, whom he shortly afterwards married. She was a woman of perhaps less mental grasp and vigor than his Amelia, but of rich cultivation, great sweetness of disposition, strong practical sense, and ardent devotedness to his happiness and to her own

domestic duties. His residence in Rome was protracted for seven years. Definite instructions from his government did not reach him till 1820, and even then, negotiations were postponed and impeded by various revolutionary and hostile movements, which usurped the attention and distracted the counsels of the Papal Court. Meanwhile, he discharged his trust as the representative of his nation by a simple, yet generous hospitality to strangers from Prussia and other German states, by the kindest personal intercourse with German artists and the liberal patronage of their works, and by prompt pecuniary aid to all of his fellow-countrymen whose merits and necessities entitled them to his kind offices. His pecuniary appointments were by no means large; and he adopted a rule, which, had the representatives of our republic in foreign courts the moral courage to copy from him, would put a period to the constantly renewed controversy as to the adequacy of their official salaries. He made it a matter of principle to expend the entire income of his office, and so to expend it as best to maintain the dignity, discharge the hospitalities, and disburse the charities, incident to his position; but beyond this he refused to go, on the ground that he should thus assume a place, a state, and an outward show alien to the implied wishes of his government, and adapted to misrepresent the national genius, character, and institutions. He felt, therefore, a certain patriotic independence and pride in living much less sumptuously and extravagantly than his fellow-ambassadors.

Life at Rome possessed many attractions for him, while, on many grounds, it was wearisome and unsatisfying. The climate, (except during a portion of the summer, when he always sought a more invigorating air among the mountains,) was peculiarly delightful to him, especially in contrast with the heavy snows, intense cold, and brief verdure of the North of Europe. The ruins of antiquity, though at first, from their desecration and defacement by the architectural abortions of the modern city, they filled him with pain, subsequently became objects of vivid interest and enjoyment. On the other hand, he found little congenial society, almost none except the attachés of his mission and the members of his household, that sympathized with his peculiar tastes; and the best Italian

society was utterly vapid or worse,—endured, not enjoyed; while his most cherished associates were young artists, with whom his intercourse was endeared by his power of aiding their penury, relieving the irksomeness of their isolated condition, and fortifying them at once against the temptations of the city and the proselyting agencies of the Romish church. His situation was also unfavorable to study. His time was very imperfectly under his own control. The Vatican library was remote from his residence, lent no books, was open only at inconvenient hours, and was so ill arranged, and under custodians of so little intelligence and courtesy, as to tantalize him more than it nourished him by its wealth. Yet under all these disadvantages, he contracted a growing fondness for Rome and Italy, and would probably have never returned to Germany, had not his wife been constantly a sufferer from the climate.

At Rome, he for the first time became a father. Amelia was childless. The birth of his eldest son was welcomed with the deepest emotion, and thenceforward his letters abound in the most touching expressions of parental tenderness. He thus announces the event to Madame Hensler, under date of April 2, 1817.

“The trial is over, and a fine and healthy little boy is born to us; but it has been a terrible trial. . . . .

“The boy weighs nearly nine German pounds, is fat and large, has red cheeks, yellow hair, and blue eyes. How Gretchen rejoices in the possession of her darling child, after all her sufferings, you can well imagine. She is very much exhausted, but very happy. She sends you a thousand kisses. She received and read your welcome letter during her two-and-thirty hours of suffering. Her patience was indescribable. In my terrible anxiety, I prayed most earnestly, and entreated my Milly, too, for help. I comforted Gretchen with telling her that Milly would send help. When she was at the worst, and she leant her weary head against me, almost dying, she sighed out—‘Oh, can not Amelia send me a blessing?’

“I have already told you what our boy’s name is to be; but he shall have a Roman one in addition, either Marcus or Lucius, by which he will be called. You have the first claim to be his sponsor; Behrens is one of course, Savigny—his guardian if I die—likewise, and Nicolovius. Should Playfair return, we shall beg him to perform the ceremony of baptism, as he was formerly a clergyman.

“I had so much to say to you on this occasion from the very depths of my heart, but I am not calm enough. Besides, I am quite exhausted by sleepless nights, anxiety, and fatigue. Your heart will tell you all. I cannot say any thing in answer to your letter to-day. You shall have tidings of us punctually.” Vol. ii. pp. 100, 101.

Again, April 30, he writes.

“The child is full of health; he looks briskly about him, and already begins to take notice. I can handle it very well; and it becomes quiet with me directly.

“I am thinking a great deal about his education. I told you, a little while ago, how I intended to teach him the ancient languages very early, by practice. I wish the child to believe all that is told him; and I now think you right in an assertion, which I have formerly disputed, that it is better to tell children no tales, but to keep to the poets. But while I shall repeat and read the old poets to him in such a way, that he will undoubtedly take the gods and heroes for historical beings, I shall tell him, at the same time, that the ancients had only an imperfect knowledge of the true God, and that these gods were overthrown when Christ came into the world. He shall believe in the letter of the Old and New Testaments, and I shall nurture in him, from his infancy, a firm faith in all that I have lost, or feel uncertain about. He shall learn to perceive and to observe, and thus grow familiar with Nature, and nourish his imagination.” Vol. ii. pp. 101, 102.

On Niebuhr's return to Germany, he established his abode in Bonn, though, as a member of the Prussian Council of State, he was obliged to spend a portion of the time at Berlin. He became a professor in the University of Bonn, and delivered several courses of lectures on the History and Antiquities of Greece and Rome, and on Ancient Geography and Ethnography. He now addressed himself to the completion of his great work. He rewrote his first and second volumes, with very numerous additions and modifications, and so far prepared the third volume for the press, that it needed only careful editorial supervision to make it all that it would have been, had he survived till its publication. The following extract from the Memoir describes his style and manner as a lecturer, and presents an interesting picture of his home life.

“At Berlin, Niebuhr delivered his lectures verbatim from written

notes. At Bonn, on the contrary, his only preparation consisted in meditating for a short time on the subject of his lecture, and referring to authorities for their data when he found it necessary, and he brought no written notes with him to the lecture-room. His success in imparting his ideas varied greatly at different times, as it depended almost entirely on his mental and physical condition at the moment. He always felt a certain difficulty in expressing himself. He grasped his subject as a whole, and it was not easy to him to retrace the steps by which he had arrived at his results. Hence his style was harsh and often disjointed; and yet he possessed a species of eloquence whose value is of a high order—that of making the expression the exact reflection of the thought—that of embodying each separate idea in an adequate but not redundant form. The discourse was no dry impersonal statement of facts and arguments, or even opinions; the whole man, with his conceptions, feelings, moral sentiments, nay passions too, was mirrored forth in it. Hence Niebuhr not merely informed and stimulated the minds of his hearers, but attracted their affections. That he did this in an eminent degree, was not indeed owing to his lectures alone, but also to his kind and generous conduct. All who deserved it were sure of his sympathy and assistance, whether oppressed by intellectual difficulties, or pecuniary cares. During the first year he delivered his lectures gratis; afterward, on its being represented to him that this would be injurious to other professors, who could not afford to do the same, he consented to take fees, but employed them in assisting poor scholars and founding prizes. He often, however, still remitted the fee privately, when he perceived that a young man could not well afford it, and never took any from friends.

“But those who were admitted to his domestic circle were the class most deeply indebted to him. His interest in all subjects of scientific or moral importance was always lively; and it was impossible to be in his company without deriving some accession of knowledge and incentive to good. From his associates he only required a warm and pure heart, and a sincere love of knowledge, with a freedom from affectation or arrogance. Where he found these, he willingly adapted himself to the wants and capacities of his companions; would receive objections mildly, and take pains to answer them even when urged by mere youths, and weigh carefully every new idea presented to him. He was fond of society, and while his great irritability not seldom gave rise to misunderstandings and contemporary estrangement in the circle of his acquaintance, there were some friends with whom he always remained on terms of unbroken intimacy; among whom may be named Professors Brandis, Arndt, Nitzsch, Bleek, Näke, Welker, and Hollweg.

He enjoyed wit in others, and in his lighter moods racy and pointed sayings escaped him not unfrequently.

“His intercourse was not confined to the literary circles. In all the civil affairs of the town and neighborhood, he took an active interest from principle as well as inclination, for he considered a man as no good citizen who refused to take his share of the public business of the neighborhood in which he lived. The loss which left so great a blank in the world of letters, was also deeply regretted by his fellow-townsmen of Bonn.

“Niebuhr’s mode of life at Bonn was very regular, and his habits simple. He hated show and unnecessary luxury in domestic life. He loved art in her proper place, but could not bear to see her degraded into the mere minister of outward ease. His life in his own family showed the erroneousness of the assertion that a thorough devotion to learning is inconsistent with the claims of family affection. He liked to hear of all the little household occurrences, and his sympathy was as ready for the little sorrows of his children as for the misfortunes of a nation. He was in the habit of rising at seven in the morning, and retiring at eleven. At the simple one o’clock dinner, he generally conversed cheerfully upon the contents of the newspapers which he had just looked through. The conversation was usually continued during the walk which he took immediately afterward. The building of a house, or the planting of a garden had always an attraction for him ; and he used to watch the measuring of a wall, or the breaking open of an entrance, with the same species of interest with which he observed the development of a political organization. They drank tea at eight o’clock, when any of his acquaintance was always welcome. But during the hours spent in his library, his whole being was absorbed in his studies, and hence he got through an immense amount of work in an incredibly short time.” Vol. ii. pp. 318 – 320.

In 1830, Niebuhr’s house was destroyed by fire, and many of his papers and letters were irrecoverably lost, — among them, the greater part of his correspondence with his father. Though he bore this misfortune with cheerfulness, it undoubtedly gave his nervous system a severe shock, and may have contributed to hasten his dissolution. We give the narrative of the closing scenes from the *Memoir*. The double quotation marks designate the hand of Professor Classen, his intimate friend, and the tutor of his son Marcus.

“The last political occurrence in which Niebuhr was strongly interested was the trial of the ministers of Charles the Tenth ; it was indirectly the cause of his death. He read the reports in the French

journals with eager attention ; and as these newspapers were much in request at that time, from the universal interest felt in their contents, he did not in general go to the public reading-rooms, where he was accustomed to see the papers daily, until the evening. On Christmas eve and the following day, he was in better health and spirits than for a long time ; but on the evening of the 25th of December, he spent a long time waiting and reading in the hot news-room, without taking off his thick fur cloak, and then returned home through the bitter frosty night air, heated in mind and body. Still full of the impression made on him by the papers, he went straight to Classen's room, and exclaimed, "That is true eloquence ! You must read Sauzet's speech ; he alone declares the true state of the case ; that this is no question of law, but an open battle between hostile powers ! Sauzet must be no common man ! But," he added immediately, "I have taken a severe chill, I must go to bed." And from the couch which he then sought, he never rose again, except for one hour, two days afterward, when he was forced to return to it quickly, with warning symptoms of his approaching end.

"His illness lasted a week, and was pronounced, on the fourth day, to be a decided attack of inflammation on the lungs. His hopes sank at first, but rose with his increasing danger and weakness ; even on the morning of the last day, he said, "I can still recover." Two days before, his faithful wife, who had exerted herself beyond her strength in nursing him, fell ill and was obliged to leave him. He then turned his face to the wall, and exclaimed, with the most painful presentiment, "Hapless house ! To lose father and mother at once !" And to the children he said, "Pray to God, children ! He alone can help us !" And his attendants saw that he himself was seeking comfort and strength in silent prayer. But when his hopes of life revived, his active and powerful mind soon demanded its wonted occupation. The studies that had been dearest to him through life, remained so in death ; his love to them was proved to be pure and genuine, by its unwavering perseverance to the last. While he was on his sick-bed, Classen read aloud to him for hours the Greek text of the Jewish History of Josephus, and he followed the sense with such ease and attention, that he suggested several emendations in the text at the moment ; this may be called an unimportant circumstance, but it always appeared to us one of the most wonderful proofs of his mental powers. The last scientific work in which he was able to testify his interest, was the description of Rome by Bunsen and his friends, which had just been sent to him ; the preface to the first volume was read aloud to him, and called forth expressions of pleasure and approbation. He also asked for light reading to pass the time, but our attempts to satisfy him



were unsuccessful. A friend proposed the "Briefe eines Verstorbenen," which was then making a sensation; but he declined it, saying he feared that its levity would jar upon his feelings. One of Cooper's novels was recommended to him, and aroused his ridicule by its extraordinary verbiage: he was much amused by an experiment which he proposed, and which consisted in taking one sentence at hap-hazard on each page, — a mode of reading which did little violence to the connection of the story. The "Kolnische Zeitung" was read aloud to him up to the last day, with extracts from the French and other journals. He asked for them expressly, only twelve hours before his death, and gave his opinion, half in jest, about the change of ministry in Paris. But on the afternoon of the 1st of January, 1831, he sank into a dreamy slumber; once, on awakening, he said that pleasant images floated before him in sleep; now and then, he spoke French in his dreams, probably he felt himself in the presence of his departed friend De Serre. As the night gathered, consciousness gradually disappeared, he woke up once more about midnight, when the last remedy was administered; he recognized in it a medicine of doubtful operation, never resorted to but in extreme cases, and said in a faint voice, "What essential substance is this? Am I so far gone?" These were his last words; he sank back on his pillow, and within an hour his noble heart had ceased to beat.

"Niebuhr's wife died nine days after him, on the 11th of the same month, about the same hour of the night. She died, in fact, of a broken heart, though her disease was, like his, an inflammation of the chest. She could shed no tears, though she longed for them, and prayed God to send them; once her eyes grew moist, when his picture was brought to her, at her own request, but they dried again, and her heavy heart was not relieved. She had her children often with her, particularly her son, and gave them her parting counsels. And so her loving and pure soul went home to God. Both rest in one grave, over which the present King of Prussia has erected a monument to the memory of his former instructor and counsellor. The children were placed under the care of Madame Hensler, at Kiel.'" Vol. ii. pp. 329 – 332.

As a historian, Niebuhr occupies a solitary eminence. He can be hardly called the founder of a new school; for, though Arnold and others have reproduced the results of his criticism in more artistical (we use this word solely in its rhetorical acceptation) and in more popular forms, hardly one man in a century is qualified to apply his method *de novo* to a remote, involved, or serio-fabulous section of human history. It is like

the *cæstus* of Entellus, which no other could wield without foolhardiness. We doubt whether any other writer of history ever came to his work from the same direction, or occupied, with regard to it, the same point of view with Niebuhr. He approached his field of labor from an eminence which seemed to overlook the entire realm of things cognizable. He had no peculiar familiarity with the annals and fortunes of Rome; it would be difficult to say with what age or nation he was not equally conversant. His choice of this subject was seemingly accidental. He was strongly urged by his friends to deliver a course of lectures before the University. On the 31st of August, he was in much perplexity in determining what to lecture upon. On the 1st of September, he arrived at a decision; the University term began on the 29th of the same month; he commenced, early in the term, the delivery of two lectures a week; and, before the close of the winter, it was known throughout the learned world that he had recreated a history, the materials of which were within every one's reach, in which it might have been not unfairly imagined that the time for discovery or for essential modifications in the received version of facts had long gone by. But had his choice fallen on Egypt or Assyria, Persia or Greece, the Dark Ages of the European nations, or the still darker of the aboriginal North Americans, his preparation would not have occupied a longer time, or have been attended with less startling or satisfactory results.

Very different is the usual course of a historical writer. He selects his subject while it is still, in its entirety, far above his grasp, and by years of incessant and concentrated toil, gradually ascends towards the comprehension of it, and deems himself prepared to write. But the process of preparation has deranged his mental perspective, magnified beyond all rational limits the peculiar field of his inquiry, and made all other countries or ages dwindle into comparative nothingness. That one country is, in his eye, the centre of the universe; or that one age, the era for which its whole past had been a preparation day, and on which the fortunes of its whole future turn. A historian, thus furnished, may indeed narrate facts in a more graceful form than that in which he read them, may

be eloquent in eulogy or in invective, may excel his predecessors on the same ground in accuracy, conciseness, elegance, or vigor of style; but it is beyond his power to describe events in their causes, relations, and issues, or to depict the true place and office of a nation or an age with reference to the human *cosmos* or the entire course of its history. To Niebuhr, on the other hand, Rome was Rome, and nothing more. It filled, on his mental retina, no larger a proportional space than it occupied in the actual world of antiquity. He could recognize its small beginnings, its slow, and often impeded or retroverted, progress, the greatness of its rivals, the prowess of its enemies, the non-heroic aspects of its doings and endurings.

Yet more; there are two kinds of history, covering the same ground, with no ostensible difference. The one simply compiles its narratives from the authorities nearest the times or in the highest repute; the other calls in the aid of anthropology in all cases of silent or conflicting authority,—determines what was from the knowledge of what must have been. The characteristics of universal human nature, the idiosyncrasies of races, the effects of soil and climate upon man, the observed relations of cause and effect in political economy, the established laws of finance, the unvarying results of experience,—all these are reliable elements in historical reasoning, and may not only settle points of fact where authorities clash, but may even authorize renderings of facts in opposition to any possible array of testimony, unless it be that of eye or ear-witnesses. Especially do these considerations have preponderant weight with reference to ages that have left no written record of themselves; for it is immeasurably more probable that tradition should have been corrupted in its channels of oral transmission, than that the well-ascertained laws of causation of human conduct, or of Providential administration, should at any time have been set aside. Now, it was precisely these criteria of historical truth that Niebuhr was eminently fitted to apply. His life, as a statesman and financier, his extended intercourse with all descriptions of men, his intense interest in the great military and political movements of his own times, effected much toward enabling him to unravel the intricacies and to reconcile the discrepancies of early Roman traditions,

and thus to trace the growth and successive modifications, and to reconstruct the fabric, of the Roman constitution.

Niebuhr has been popularly represented as the coryphæus of historical scepticism. Nothing could be further from the truth. So far from setting aside traditions, it was his prime endeavor to account for them, and to disinter the germs of fact from which they sprang. A large portion of the events recorded in Roman history took place before the birth-time of the earliest historians whose works are extant. The writers, therefore, are valid witnesses, not of facts, but of the current belief, actual or ostensible, of the men of their own times. Actual or ostensible, we say; for, even in modern nations, (and this must have been much oftener the case in ancient times,) there are certain historical fictions adapted to cherish national vanity, exaggerations or extenuations, heroic versions of unheroic incidents, glorified portraits of the meanly or the wickedly great, which are known to be false, but written about as if they were true, and employed as counterpoises to similar historical fictions of rival nations. Thus every people, even the youngest, (our own New England, our republic which has not celebrated its first centennial, constitutes no exception to this statement,) has its heroic age, with its fables and its heightened coloring,—its ancestral images, which no iconoclast is bold enough to dash from their pedestals. Now, in ages that wrote little or no history, and before the canons of historical criticism were applied, or its necessity was recognized, there must needs have been much more room than at subsequent periods, both for the ignorant and the conventional distortion of facts. But tradition has its conditions and laws of development, both general and local. Oral transmission for a series of generations has certain inevitable tendencies. These tendencies are modified by the genius, the environments, and the fortunes of every individual people. Niebuhr's question, then, was: What effect must the admitted character, and the undoubted relations and experiences, of the Roman people have had upon their traditions? What constant formula, what variable coefficients will express the degree and the direction of increment and of change, which facts must have undergone between the age of Romulus, of Numa, of the

Tarquins, of the early commonwealth, and that of the earliest historians extant? That formula, those coefficients, applied to the reduction of history, as it was written, must give us facts as they actually occurred. This, in brief, was Niebuhr's method, and his fame as a historian rests on its rigid, impartial, unsparing, scientific application.

The volumes under review bring to light numerous facts illustrative of Niebuhr's infallible foresight in the prognosis of events, which are adapted to conciliate confidence in his retrospective judgments. Nature endowed him with a power, which it seems hardly sacrilegious to term historical divination. Wonderful stories are related of the manifestations of this faculty in his early boyhood.

"It is said that when the war with Turkey broke out in the year 1787, it so strongly excited the child's mind, that he not only talked of it in his sleep at night, but fancied himself in his dreams reading the newspapers and repeating the intelligence they contained about the war; and his ideas on these subjects were so well arranged, and founded on so accurate a knowledge of the country and the situation of the towns, that the realization of his nightly anticipations generally appeared in the journals a short time afterward. Of course, this is not to be regarded as indicating a miraculous gift of prophecy in the boy, but only as showing with what distinctness all that he heard transferred itself to his imagination, and how capable his understanding was of combining the ideas he had received in their true relation to each other. Partly through his father's narratives, partly through his own geographical studies, those regions were as familiar to him as his native province. He had studied the nations inhabiting them, and their mode of warfare, in history and the accounts of travellers, and had taken great pains to gain accurate conceptions of the character and conduct of the various commanders in the war, from the journals and other sources of information. There are still extant some letters which he wrote at this time to his uncle Eckhardt, containing the grounds and proofs of his predictions.

"This faculty of divination exhibited itself again during the early part of the French Revolution; when, in several instances, he not only anticipated the course of events with reference to the progress of the war, but also the direction which popular movements would take, the plans and objects of the revolutionary leaders, and the results of the measures adopted by the various parties, with so much correctness and precision as to excite the astonishment even of the eminent states-

man Count P. A. Bernstorff, that such a mere youth should have so just and acute an appreciation of men and events. With equal correctness and certainty did he guess the plans of the commanders during the war, from the marches and position of the armies, in which his exact and detailed geographical knowledge served as a guide to his judgment. He retained this faculty to a considerable extent during the whole of his life, but he possessed it in a higher degree in his earlier years, when he could concentrate the whole power of his mind on impressions of this kind. Vol. i. pp. 15, 16.

Though one of the most modest of men, he professes, in repeated instances, in his correspondence, with regard to future events, "that unshakable conviction which results from the immediate intuition of the truth." In 1820, he writes, "All comes to pass just as I had long ago foreseen and foretold, and all that I now foresee will also come to pass;" and again, in 1823, referring to a long and complicated series of transactions, "events in Spain are turning out, step for step, just as I expected;"—"I have foreseen all this." In one of his letters, he goes so far as to say, that not an important political event had taken place from his childhood, otherwise than as he had anticipated.

Perhaps this description of political foresight is not so rare as it seems, or need not be so rare as it is. So easy is it for us, in numerous instances, to see why events, which we had not expected, could not have failed to take place, as to authorize the belief that our ignorance of the future results less from the lack of the elements necessary for calculation, than from a discolored or perturbed medium of vision. Certain it is, that, where there is room for mistake, professed politicians are proverbially liable to be mistaken, and none are more frequently at fault in their vaticinations than those whose place is at the very centre of affairs. On the other hand, retired and unworldly men, who seem to take very slight cognizance of public concerns, and are the very last persons to whom one would resort for the horoscope of the political future, have been often known to utter predictions, which, deemed at the time absurd and baseless, have proved themselves literally and circumstantially true. We well remember, on the appearance of Dr. Channing's Letter to Henry Clay, in 1837, the indignation

expressed in many quarters, and the almost universal regret among his friends, that he should have exposed the soundness of his intellect to suspicion, by predicting a series of transactions and events of which politicians, of all parties, declared that there was not the remotest possibility. But that letter may now be read, with the tenses changed, as history, and would hardly need a qualifying clause. In point of fact, it is a position aside from the arena of selfish rivalry and ambition that enables one to discern in the present the undeveloped germs of the future. Niebuhr, indeed, can hardly be said to have stood aside, but gained even a clearer point of view by rising above, the arena. He was a statesman from his love of political science, and his patriotic devotion to the well-being of Germany; but he had neither selfish nor party ends to serve in his official stations. He never sought office, never merged his own independence in the collective judgment of his colleagues, never failed, in case of his dissent from measures for which he might seem partially accountable, to put on record his own, often his solitary, negative or protest, with the reasons for it. It is an insult to his memory to term him a politician, in the hackneyed sense of that term; nor can we conceive of his intellectual vision as ever having been befogged or distorted by the ophthalmic miasma that is wont to infect the purlieus of courts.

The occasional existence of a prophetic faculty, thus founded on the laws of human nature, and the deductions of experience, suggests hints, which it would be out of place for us to develop here, toward the approximate solution of the most complex of all problems. It was not alone concerning material results, but equally concerning the voluntary acts of free agents, that Niebuhr hazarded his confident and successful predictions. The persons might have acted otherwise than they did; yet, with his knowledge of their characters and of the motives brought to bear upon them, he could foresee, with certainty, how they were going to act. Must not similar elements of calculation exist with reference to the common acts of private men, so that a being who could fully understand their characters and appreciate their motives, might always foreknow their moral decisions, though they all the

while were conscious of perfect freedom? May there not, then, be a necessity perfectly consistent with freedom,—a fixedness in the moral order of the universe appertaining to events that are contingent so far as the consciousness of the actors is concerned? And is it not in this direction that we are to look for the coincidence between human free agency and the divine prescience? Let it not be deemed irreverent that we should thus seek, from the phenomena of human experience, to illustrate the attributes of the Infinite Creator. Our conceptions of him must necessarily be cast in moulds furnished by our consciousness as men; it is under figures derived from the conditions and relations of men that he has revealed himself in the Scriptures; and it is in a human form that he has manifested himself to the world, and offered himself to the faith and worship of mankind.

To return to Niebuhr, it was not alone in Roman history that he won even distinguished fame among the learned men of the Continent. There was hardly a department of archæology to which he did not render essential service. The multitude of his essays, translations, editions of obscure texts from the collation of manuscripts, restorations of palimpsests, and contributions to the literary labors of his friends, was incredibly great. At the same time, he maintained an extensive correspondence with *savans*, not in Germany alone, but in France and England. In travelling, he paused to inspect every library on his route, and seldom failed to collect valuable materials for some work of his own in hand, or in aid of some enterprise in progress under the auspices of others.

At the same time, he was undoubtedly the most accomplished financier in Europe. His financial services, under the Danish government, were of the most arduous and responsible character, and were executed with equal comprehensiveness of plan and minuteness of detail. In Prussia, he found an exhausted exchequer, dilapidated resources, and an impending national bankruptcy; and it was mainly through his administrative energy that the credit of the government was restored, its revenue system reorganized, its currency regulated, and its pecuniary relations established on a safe basis. With the financial system and transactions of Great Britain he was as



familiar as the British ministry; and not infrequently predicted the revenues of a year, foretold deficits, exposed erroneous estimates, as they were laid before parliament, and indicated a much more accurate acquaintance with the contents of the ministerial budget than was possessed by its authors.

In his political theories, he occupied the just mean between radicalism and conservatism. He was enamored with the British constitution, and was solicitous for the introduction of the representative system so far and so fast as nations were prepared to exercise their franchise with intelligence and freedom. But he abhorred revolutionary doctrines and measures. He had no faith in written constitutions or in merely external reforms; but believed that institutions would quietly and gradually adapt themselves to the capacities and just demands of the people. The following passage will show how little he hoped from merely formal changes in the state.

“Our disease is far too deeply seated to be removed by mere changes in the constitution; for, from no change made in these times, and by the men of this generation, can we venture to hope for that legislation, which might bring us into a healthful and progressive condition, by transforming our habits and our entire social circumstances. What we want, is as certain and clear to me as my own existence, and to a great extent I could express it, but it were to talk to the winds, and I do not choose to be dragged through the mire to no purpose. ‘They have Moses and the Prophets, and hear them not.’ Were I in power, I would act, and with vigor, in God’s name, even if it brought danger to myself.” Vol. ii. p. 393.

In close connection with this paragraph, we find the recognition of a system analogous to that of our little New England municipalities, each with its separate corps of officials, as the best possible plan for the education of citizens for the enjoyment of political freedom on a more extended scale.

“Constitutional forms are of no use among an enervated or foolish nation. What avails the choice of representatives, when there are no men fit to represent the people? Is it answered, ‘Let them learn by practice;’ that is, indeed, to sport with the gravest matters. I say; give them free communal institutions, and let them, in the first instance, learn by practice within a sphere with which they are

acquainted. Believe me (but that *you* know already,) I know how to prize a free constitution, and am certainly better acquainted than most with its meaning and worth; but, of all things, the first and most essential is, that a nation should be manly, unselfish, and honorable. If it is that, free laws will grow up of themselves by degrees." Vol. ii. p. 395.

Nearly allied to these ideas was his preference of physical amelioration, for the depressed classes, to the institution of exclusively intellectual and moral measures, for their elevation, which can have little success while their penury and misery remain unabated, but which will be the inevitable consequence of their material prosperity. The following may seem an extreme statement of the case; but is well worthy the careful regard of every friend to humanity.

"If you consider the charge of the physical well-being of the helpless an undignified employment,\* I think you are mistaken; and that you attach too much importance altogether to the intellectual part of our nature in the mass of mankind. I believe that on that subject we have a totally false view, in these days, and though I do not think it can mislead you, I should prefer seeing you openly espouse a contrary view, as I do myself on the firmest conviction. Do you not agree with me, that the so-called education which we claim as indispensable for the people, whether it be of a high cast, and consisting of numerous branches of knowledge and modes of applying the understanding and talents, or restricted to the first rudiments, is only valuable in so far as it is a true approximation to that free spiritual life, where the soul dwells in a world of ideas and notions, in which the world of sense is transmuted, and on which it becomes dependent? That it is, therefore, absolutely worthless—indeed, rather injurious—when it disturbs a man destined to every-day life, in his truthful, instinctive mode of perception and action within his own sphere, and only gives him in return notions taken at second-hand, and torn out of their natural connection? And yet that this is unavoidable with all teaching and cultivation which does not go very deep? That, for instance, writing and reading, except for the purposes of business, are to the mass of the people superfluous even as a discipline for the memory, and a dangerous gift when they are used completely at random, as the common people use them, so that they acquire only a multitude of

\* "He is here referring to a wish he had expressed, to see Madame Hensler at the head of one of the great charitable institutions of Holland."

distorted notions; because, by this means, the common man is deprived of the truth his senses teach him, which nature has given him for his guidance, and becomes familiarized with another and distorted truth, which takes no firm hold on his mind, and yet robs him of the power of judging for himself? But if it be a moral rather than an intellectual culture which you ask for, this can scarcely be effected with a multitude of orphan children taken in the mass, except by selecting individuals, and by keeping those who are only fit for the usual avocations of their class as simple as possible. And I need not ask you whether this simplicity, which preserves the outlines of good and evil in human nature clear and distinct, even though it cannot choke the evil, be not better than the confused ideas of morality prevailing among the higher classes, which cannot really elevate and make them free, and over which at last a varnish is spread. But it appears to me that pure, uncultivated nature cannot dispense with the satisfaction of all her simple requirements, and that this satisfaction is the best security for the morals of the many, as its want is usually the main source of their degeneracy, except in those who seem utterly bad by nature. A highly cultivated man may dispense with many things voluntarily, because he lives in another world. Thus the charge of physical well-being appears to me as interesting in the cause of morality, as it is in that of humanity; while, on the contrary, it is a characteristic of our age, that, amidst the ever-increasing misery of the lower classes, we are so earnestly busied in establishing schools for them; not to speak of the absurdity of the popular works which we put into their hands." Vol. i. pp. 246 - 248.

Niebuhr's moral nature impresses us with even higher admiration than his genius and his learning. We look through his correspondence in vain for the traces of an ungenerous sentiment. The reputation, the fame, of others was as sacred as his own, in his regard. He seemed more earnest to bestow merited commendation than solicitous to receive it. His vast intellectual resources were freely lavished in aid alike of great literary enterprises, from which he could derive neither credit nor emolument, and of students at the very threshold of their career. He was seldom engaged in controversy; but in these few instances, his conduct toward his opponents was marked by the utmost candor, fairness, and magnanimity. Misrepresentation and detraction he bore with the meekness of conscious strength and rectitude. He unit-

ed humility with a just self-appreciation; and knew how to assume always his own due place, to utter his convictions, and to maintain his rights, without vanity, arrogance, or encroachment. His pecuniary liberality was only and hardly limited by his means. He was profusely charitable. To the sufferers by invasion and pillage, his purse was constantly open; and he denied himself luxuries, and even books, that he might minister to their necessities. In one of his letters, he writes, "During this vacation, I have been reviewing all kinds of books, not without reference to the circumstances of the times. But I have another object, namely, to earn some money for a friend who wants it." In another letter, addressed to his wife, we find the following, which may be taken as a fair *exposé* of his conduct through life, as to his pecuniary concerns.

" . . . . The pay for the attendance in the Council is so large that I do not use it all. It seemed to me dishonorable to take more than I wanted; but I am told it would be considered unbecoming to decline it. So I will apply the surplus to assist those who have suffered in Dithmarsh by the floods. You would, no doubt, approve of my doing so, if I could consult you. I will send the money to Dora, that she may see that it is divided so as to be a real benefit, not among too many.

"If our things have not been shipwrecked in the Texel, I shall buy some more plate; else, the money must go to replace what we have lost." Vol. ii. pp. 310, 311.

We have spoken, incidentally, of the depth of his domestic affections, and the openness of his hospitality. To his character as a husband, father, and friend, we must quote a large portion of these volumes, to do even partial justice. Not only was he pure, true, considerate, and faithful, in the discharge of all outward obligations; but there was in his affections a lofty spirituality, combined with a womanly tenderness, of which Klopstock's correspondence with his Meta furnishes almost the only parallel in modern literature. Irresistibly affecting are his life-long references to his first wife, as a spiritual presence, strengthening him for duty, cheering him in despondency, visiting him in the visions of

the night, and ministering, in every form of heavenly benediction, to his Gretchen and her children.

A character so harmoniously beautiful could hardly have been formed and sustained, except on the basis of a sincere and vital Christian faith. Duty with him was not merely truth to his own nature, but loyalty to its Author. Religious reverence seems to have been a constantly pervading and hallowing sentiment; nor, in his whole correspondence, is there the slightest mention of aught that could claim to be held sacred, except in terms that indicate, on his part, the very spirit of worship. He was a firm believer in historical Christianity, that is, in the Christ of the Evangelists, not in any Straussian effigy of straw, galvanized into life by the fancy of fanatical reformers. When we consider his unparalleled historical acumen, and the unsparing hand with which he manipulated classical tradition and fable, when also we take into the account his early tendencies to scepticism, we know not how to value sufficiently the testimony comprised in the following extract. It is in a letter written in 1812, a date which gives it a peculiar worth, as he had then attained the full maturity of his powers, had laid the foundation for his fame as an historical critic by his Berlin lectures, and had not yet experienced those sad domestic vicissitudes, in which he might have been suspected of resorting to religious faith as a refuge from disappointment and grief.

“Faith, properly so called, in a much wider sense than religious faith, it is either not given to every nature to possess, or the possibility of its taking root and flourishing may be annihilated by an inharmonious intellectual life. The soil may be fertile, but the climate ungenial. My intellect early took a sceptical direction. With my whole attention bent upon the real and the historical, eager to comprehend, and to get to the bottom of every thing, I let my thoughts follow the natural association of ideas, without endeavoring to guide them into any particular channel; and in this respect had neither, properly speaking, a truly creative imagination, nor any strong feeling of the need of something beyond the boundaries of experience to satisfy my heart; or perhaps I let both perish for want of nourishment. Altogether, it was very seldom that the consciousness of a thought vanished from my mind in the contemplation of its import and object. To this,

unquestionably my natural turn of mind, was added the influence of miserable religious instruction, and of the living study of classical antiquity. Thus, it was in riper years, and through the study of history, that I came back for the first time to the sacred books, which I read in a purely critical spirit, and with the purpose of studying their contents as the groundwork of one of the most remarkable phenomena in the history of the world. This was not a mood in which real faith could spring up, for it was that of the Protestantism of the present day. I needed no Wolfenbüttel Fragments \* to discover the discrepancies of the Gospels, and the impossibility of even drawing the outlines of a tenable history of the life of Jesus by such criticism. In the Messianic allusions to the Old Testament, I could recognize no prophecies, and could explain all the passages adduced with perfect ease. But here, as in every historical subject, when I contemplated the immeasurable gulf between the narrative and the facts narrated, this disturbed me no further. He, whose earthly life and sorrows were depicted, had for me a perfectly real existence, and his whole history had the same reality, even if it were not related with literal exactness in any single point. Hence, also, the fundamental fact of miracles, which, according to my conviction, must be conceded, unless we adopt the not merely incomprehensible, but absurd hypothesis, that the Holiest was a deceiver, and his disciples either dupes or liars; and that deceivers had preached a holy religion, in which self-renunciation is every thing, and in which there is nothing tending toward the erection of a priestly rule—nothing that can be acceptable to vicious inclinations. As regards a miracle in the strictest sense, it really only requires an unprejudiced and penetrating study of nature, to see that those related are as far as possible from absurdity, and a comparison with legends, or the pretended miracles of other religions, to perceive by what a different spirit they are animated." Vol. i. pp. 338–340.

On this, as on many other topics, we should be glad to multiply our quotations, and had intended to make much more copious extracts, had not a cheap American republication appeared while these beautifully printed volumes have been in our hands. We would gladly have shown Niebuhr in his relations with his coevals in the world of letters, and especially with his juniors and *protégés*, who have since risen to eminence, such as Bunsen, Brandis, Lieber, and Classen.

\* "The anonymous Fragments on the Discrepancies of the Gospel Narratives, edited by Lessing while head librarian at Wolfenbüttel. Lessing was long supposed to have written them himself, but after his death, clear proofs were found among his papers that they were from the pen of Reimar." 3\*

Many of his literary criticisms, also, we should have been glad to place before our readers, had the work continued inaccessible to our public generally. We will confine ourselves, however, to a striking extract from a letter on Goethe, with which we close our imperfect sketch, satisfied if it shall have induced some few to make themselves familiar, at first hand, with the "Life and Letters."

"We are reading Wilhelm Meister at present, as fast as my want of practice in reading aloud will permit. I had never before been able to take any pleasure in this book, and was curious to see if it would be different now, as in middle age we are less one-sided than in youth, and can enjoy relative and separate beauties, even when the whole does not make an agreeable or overpowering impression on us. But it is the same as ever with me. Our language possesses, probably, nothing more elaborate or more perfect in style (excepting Klopstock's 'Republic of Letters'); in clearness of outline and vividness of coloring, there is nothing to compare with it in our literature; it contains a multitude of acute remarks and magnificent passages; the situations are managed with extreme ingenuity, and all the parts are in admirable keeping; all this I can appreciate now better than formerly. But the unnaturalness of the plot, the violence with which what is beautifully sketched and executed in single groups is brought to bear upon the development, and the mysterious conduct of the whole, the impossibilities such a plot involves, and the thorough heartlessness, which even makes one linger with the greater interest by the utterly sensual personages, because they do show something akin to feeling; the villany or meanness of the heroes, whose portraits nevertheless often amuse us — all this still makes the book revolting to me, and I get disgusted with such a menagerie of tame cattle.

"Is it not your feeling, too, that few things leave a more painful impression than for a great spirit to bind its own wings, and seek to excel in the lower regions of art, while renouncing the higher? Goethe is the poet of human passion and human greatness, under all their manifestations, and as such he appears in his early poems. Probably, indeed, he might then have made himself master of the whole sphere, to the furthest limits of which he was often involuntarily borne on the wings of spontaneous inward impulse. He neglected to possess himself of this united realm, which, perhaps, no single intellect had ever ruled with so absolute a sway as might have been his, and the wild and fragmentary character of his youthful productions displeased even himself in his riper years. It was chiefly after he had

studied art, during his travels in Italy, that he strove after unity and completeness. His first attempts in this style, and his productions from 1786 to 1790, are quite unworthy of him. They simply display a thoroughly unpoetical, wearisome reality. But he wished to become a master in this style as well as in others, and to do so, he narrowed his mind. To me this is most melancholy. If you study his writings from this time forward, you find, in nearly all of them, a tameness which is quite unnatural to him. By degrees, there appears some re-awakening of his native and peculiar feelings, particularly with reference to his own inward life, at least in recollection; but the years gone by are lost, and, through them, those also which yet remain to him. I hope that he will find his youth restored by living through his history again in memory." Vol. i. pp. 333, 334.

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ART. II.—*The Captains of the Old World, as compared with the great Modern Strategists; their Campaigns, Character, and Conduct, from the Persian to the Punic Wars.* By HENRY WILLIAM HERBERT. New York: Charles Scribner. 1851. 12mo. pp. 364.

IN this work, we have, once more visibly represented on the military stage, in arms as when they lived, those grand old warriors, whose heads are towering forever into that strongest light of Greek history, which is radiant for forty Olympiads, and illustrates, within that space, the most remarkable military achievements the world ever saw. These great names—Miltiades, Themistocles, Pausanias, Xenophon, Epaminondas, Alexander, and the rest, are very familiar; but we never grow tired of them, seeing that they are identified with our early enthusiasm for battle and liberty; and we are always "ready, aye ready," to follow that famous march from Athens to the sea-shore, with the ten thousand burghers and resident aliens, accompanied by the tears, prayers and vows of those congregated on the roofs and at the windows of houses and on the porches and steps of the temples; or to sit with Xerxes, on the promontory, and see the barbarian armament scattered and sunk, between sea-born Salamis and the shore; or to